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## Kidney link

NHS has launched a new program to connect dialysis patients.  
Page 3

## End of a chapter

The popular Pulp Comics store is closing its doors in the new year.  
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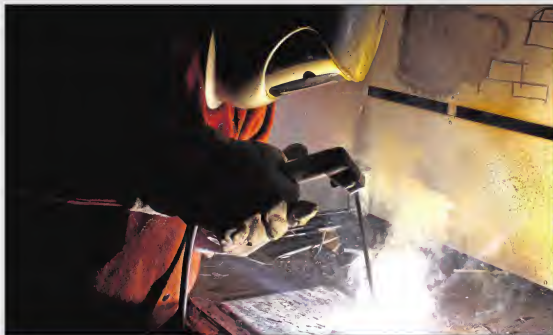
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## Sparks fly at Port High



ALLAN BENNER / QMI

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# UPFRONT

## ■ HEALTH

# Province putting limits on e-cigarettes

**BOB HOULE**  
QMI Agency Niagara

She was a heavy smoker for 50 years, but she hasn't had a haul on a cigarette in seven months.

That Arlene Atherton was able to free herself from the shackles of tobacco is directly attributable to getting her nicotine fix via the vaporized juice of an electronic cigarette.

"I'm 66 years old," Atherton said, while sitting on a sofa and puffing on a e-cigarette at DnK Vapour Shop in St. Catharines.

"I've tried every way imaginable to quit."

She finally did it with the help of Dave Purcer and Kim Gaudreau, owners of DnK, who guided her in the use of an e-cigarette.

Because she was a heavy smoker, she was started on a "juice" that had 24 milligrams of nicotine per millilitre of liquid. She has since weaned herself down to three milligrams of nicotine in the liquid.

"And I've not had a drag on a cigarette," she said.

New provincial government measures putting restrictions on e-cigarette usage and sales equal to those already on regular smoked was the topic of discussion at DnK recently between Purcer, Gaudreau, Rex Lu — a sales representative for a Brampton-based e-cigarette juice distributor — and Jim Atherton.

The new restrictions will ban the sale of e-cigarettes to minors and outline use of the products by adults in public wherever smoking is prohibited, associate Health Minister Dipika Damerla announced last Monday.

The province also plans to prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco, including menthol cigarettes, she said.

"This is clearly marketed towards kids," Damerla said. "Flavoured tobacco has been the latest marketing tool for tobacco companies to appeal to youth to create that next generation of smokers."

Young people often become

regular smokers when they start with flavoured tobacco, which comes in kid-friendly flavours like watermelon and strawberry, she said.

The age restriction will not affect their business, Gaudreau and Purcer said, as they already refuse to sell to anyone under 19.

"I travel around to four or five vape shops per day," Lu said. "And there's not one vape shop that doesn't self-regulate ... No shop that I know of will sell to a minor."

Gaudreau and Purcer see themselves as providing an essential service in helping people quit smoking. They said 99% of their sales are to former smokers, and they feel under new regulations their ability to do so will be greatly compromised if they cannot display or talk about their products.

"(Businesses) will be affected greatly," Purcer said.

"We won't be able to display our flavours or our liquids. We won't be able to display our product, so people would have to know what they want."

"But it's not just that," Gaudreau interjected, "it's customer service — to know how to use it properly and correctly."

The bans are expected to take effect Jan. 1, 2015, except for the prohibition on menthol tobacco, which would begin Jan. 1, 2017.

Count Niagara Region's Maria Brigantino among supporters of the new regulations.

"In terms of e-cigarettes, we support this as a precautionary approach because we're concerned that e-cigarettes will help to re-normalize tobacco use," said the public health department's manager of chronic disease and injury prevention.

"A lot of our efforts have been around protecting the

public from second-hand smoke and creating these policies, but part of that is to prevent young people from starting to smoke.

"And limiting where you can use tobacco prevents young people from starting to smoke and actually helps people who are trying to quit smoking. So if you've got this electronic cigarette that looks like a real cigarette, that, in essence, will help to re-normalize tobacco use, which is not what we want to do."

The new legislation under the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014, also would require restaurants, bars, grocery stores and convenience stores with 20 or more locations in Ontario to post the calo-

rie count of standard food and beverages on menus and menu boards.

"This is a positive step for consumers," Brigantino said. "People face many barriers to eating healthy, especially when dining out ... Making sure that nutritional information is available is a positive step to good health. At the end of the day, what we want is to make it easier for families to make healthier food choices."

If passed, the legislation will enable public health inspectors to enforce the labelling requirements.

— with files from QMI Agency

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Twitter: BobH\_Standard



DnK Vapour Shop owners Kim Gaudreau and Dave Purcer will be restricted in displaying their wares under proposed provincial legislation.



PHOTOS BY BOB HOULE/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

E-cigarette users Jim and Arlene Atherton enjoy a puff at DnK Vapour Shop on Niagara St. in St. Catharines.

# LOCAL NEWS

■ **HEALTH:** NHS launches online community for people undergoing dialysis

## Kidney patients get connected

**MARYANNE FIRTH**  
QMI Agency Niagara

Four times a week, Kirsten Ernesaks walks into the St. Catharines hospital and settles in for three hours of treatment.

It's a routine she has developed over the past three years.

Though the facilities have changed in that time, many of the faces in the neighbouring beds of the dialysis unit are the same.

Despite spending ample time in the same room as others undergoing treatment in Niagara Health System's kidney care program, Ernesaks still felt a disconnect from her fellow patients.

Too much space between beds. Noisy but necessary medical equipment humming away.

That led to a feeling of isolation — and not just for the 36-year-old St. Catharines woman.

The NHS received feedback from its hemodialysis patients in the Garden City asking for some way to create a sense of

As a result, a pilot project was launched in September and an online Google Plus community created just for

While undergoing treatment, patients can connect to the online forums through the health system's integrated bedside terminals and have private chats with one another or open public discussions.

"It makes dialysis a little less scary," Ernesaks said.  
"You don't feel so alone."



MARTYNE FIRTH/OMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Dialysis patients Kirsten Ernesaks and Marcia Prince chat briefly while Prince undergoes treatment at the St. Catharines hospital. The pair met online in a new Google Plus community created by the Niagara Health System.

She described the online community as a "different sort of social group that can come together to discuss something we have in common."

"Dialysis patients are unique in what we can eat, what we can do. And our social life, because of dialysis, can be limited."

Connecting with people facing similar circumstances offers a form of support and understanding no one else

Dialysis patients, she added,

have their own language, often talking about blood pressure and other aspects of their health, such as fistulas — bumps on the skin where needles used in hemodialysis are placed.

"The outside world doesn't understand, but we understand."

In addition to opening up the lines of communication

between patients, the project allows further interaction with different members of the kidney care team.

Monthly live chats have been hosted to discuss a variety of topics and allow patients to have their questions answered by medical professionals, including a nephrologist, renal pharmacist, social worker and program manager.

Along with learning to inter-

pret their blood work results, patients have received helpful tips about taking their medication and learned about the health benefits of dialysis.

"Through the chats, I've been able to find out more about my health," said Ernestsaks, who acts as one of two patient moderators who monitor and promote the use

"It's the concept of 'Nothing about us, without us,'" said

Cindy Bryson, the outpatient kidney care program manager in St. Catharines.

"We're keen on having the patients help us to identify improvements that can be made."

There are up to 180 dialysis patients on a weekly basis in St. Catharines. About 45 have joined the online community so far.

With the program off the ground, the challenge now becomes raising awareness, said Bryson.

It has been gaining momentum, she said, "but slowly."

Staff have been working to promote the program among senior patients, teaching them to use the technology and access the useful online information.

The program is "still in the infant stages," but the hope is to see it expanded to include the 300 dialysis patients across the region, including those at the Welland and Niagara Falls hospitals, Bryson said.

It is currently being expanded to include 19 patients undergoing hemodialysis in their homes.

"We want to make sure our feet are firmly planted first," she said. "We want to make sure we're doing it right."

Bryson is unaware of any other renal program in Ontario or Canada that has undertaken a similar project. It was made possible in part by a \$49,500 grant from the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement.

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## ■ I'VE BEEN THINKING

# I've been thinking about incarnation

FATHER DAVID GRAHAM SCOTT

St. Ignace of Antioch Orthodox Church

Incarnation means enfleshment. St. John said that the Word became flesh. The Word was from the beginning. The Word was with God. The Word was God.

The Word was the grammar, the logic, the rationality behind creation. All things were made by Him.

The Word became flesh, human flesh, a human being. Human beings were created in the image of God. And so He created them male and female, to reflect the one God's threeness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The eternal Son of God is the Word, who became a human being.

For the Word to become a human being in human history, He had to be conceived in a

woman's womb. As Son He already had his Father. And so the Creator Spirit provided the Davidic genes necessary for the Virgin Mary to conceive a son. But the great wonder is that the Creator Word became what He was not, a creature.

The Nicene Creed says that the only-begotten Son of God "was incarnate of the holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made a human being." But the incarnation of the Son of God took place only after the young Virgin freely accepted God's plan for her to bear His Son.

The reality of the infinite Creator of the universe is so great that contraries are needed to point to him congruently and truly. God is Spirit, infinite and incomprehensible. We would not even know Him if he did not condescend to speak to us. God condescends to us because God is love.

Love communicates. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit communicate in an eternal choreography or ballet of love. And in love God willed to create a universe that would house human beings who would reflect His image, His love and His freedom, until they were transfigured and could live with Him forever.

God addressed the man and the woman, inviting them to be fruitful and to multiply, but under no circumstances to eat the fruit of one particular tree (out of thousands) in the garden estate, for to eat of that fruit would rupture their relationship with Him and result in their death.

The man and the woman found themselves in conversation with the Liar, who brazenly denied that they would die if they ate the forbidden fruit. They chose to eat from that one forbidden tree. They soon found themselves

blaming one another. They no longer had the relationship with God or with each other that they used to have. The world that they had known with God was closed to them, and they had to live in God's beautiful world that now included lies, disease and death.

But the God who is love still spoke to them. And in their hearing God told the Liar that there would be enmity between him and the woman, and that her seed would bruise his head, and He would bruise her seed's heel.

And so the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the woman's seed was lifted up on a cross, that whoever believed in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

## Shipwrecks — Delphin

SHIP GILLMAN

For QMI Agency Niagara

The Liberty ship *Delphin* made two trips to the Great Lakes. It traded inland for one voyage in each of 1963 and 1964 with registry in Liberia.

This was one of many similar ships built in the United States during the Second World War. It was constructed at Portland, Maine, and launched as *T.S. Gold* on Jan. 23, 1945. It managed a few months of war service before peace was restored.

The vessel operated under private interests as *Chian Broeze* before becoming *Delphin* in 1954. It carried the name for a decade and came through the St. Lawrence Seaway at the end of its career.

The ship was sold again late in 1964 and was renamed *Ever Blessing*. It suffered severe damage in a grounding at Saishu To, near Inchon, South Korea, on April 19, 1967. It was refloated 10 days later but was not fit for further service.

The 134.6-metre-long freighter was towed to Shimomura, Japan, then Kure and finally Hirao. It arrived at the latter port on Aug. 31, 1967, and was broken up by Japanese ship-breakers and recycled.



Delphin pictured upbound in the Eisenhower Lock.

DAN MCCORMICK/COURTESY BROCKVILLE MUSEUM

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# LOCAL NEWS

■ **MUSIC:** Port Colborne singer releases debut CD



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Port Colborne singer/songwriter Sarah Boulton is hosting a free concert at Riverstone Event Centre in Welland on Monday, Dec. 29 to celebrate the launch of her debut album, *Undefined*.

## Health scare prompts leap toward dream job

**MARYANNE FIRTH**  
QMI Agency Nagara

Sarah Boulton isn't ready to plan B. She knows her dreams are risky, but it's a chance the singer/songwriter feels she needs to take.

The Port Colborne native set out to become a teacher, beginning her first year of Brock University's concurrent education program in fall of 2013.

But the now 19-year-old had difficulty finding happiness in the classroom. "I had always wanted to be a musician, but was encouraged to do Plan B first," she said from her lakeside city home.

Then a health scare in early 2014 helped Boulton realize that if she was ever going to pursue her passion, it had to be now.

The singer was struck with a particularly bad bout of laryngitis that left her unable to perform for months.

"I couldn't speak for a week, and it was two months before I could even make a sound when I sang. Everything was so swollen," she said.

The inability to sing left Boulton feeling trapped.

"It was like something was stuck inside

of me. I wanted to let it out, but I couldn't. It was horrible."

She underwent several intense sessions with a vocal specialist in hopes of getting her full range back.

"I was worried I'd never get back to my full potential," she said.

When his voice eventually returned, she promised herself she would set Plan B aside and follow her heart.

"I just had to take the chance and try," Boulton has released her debut album, *Undefined*.

"It's a huge accomplishment. I've always wanted to have that finished product," she said of the acoustic-style album, which is filled with personal reflections from the past year.

The CD is now in the hands of about 75 college radio stations across the country, a handful of which, including Brock, have added Boulton's songs to their on-air playlists.

*Undefined* can be purchased on iTunes or by contacting Boulton through her website at [www.sarahboulton.com](http://www.sarahboulton.com).

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# LOCAL NEWS

## FACEBOOK

# Falls Checks In at No. 1

TONY RICCIUTO  
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara Falls is No. 1. A few Toronto locations are on the list as are the Calgary Zoo and the Capilano Suspension Bridge in Vancouver.

The list, which was released by Facebook, shows Niagara Falls as the top checked in location in Canada in 2014.

The Rogers Centre came in second and Ripley's Aquarium of Canada placed third on the list of 12 top places.

Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati, who is active on social media, said he is pleased, but not surprised the city received top billing.

"Whenever I talk to people from Toronto, the United States or from anywhere, they think of Niagara Falls as something of a playground and a place to have fun for all ages," said Diodati. "Something like that on Facebook doesn't surprise me at all. We are far enough for people to get out of Dodge, but

it's close enough and affordable." For people who are not familiar with the Checked In feature on Facebook, this is how it's described by its help centre.

"When someone is on a smartphone, they can enable location services and share where they are by checking in to a location. To check in to a location, from your News Feed, tap Check In. Select the location where you are from the list of nearby places. If you don't see your location, type the name of the place you're at into the search box. Write an operational description of what you're doing. You can also tag your friends at your location. Tap Post to share."

Diodati said he is on Facebook every day, but has never used that feature.

"I'm constantly chronicling my visits, my ribbon cuttings and my visitations, but I don't get involved because there are so many applications and things

that you can do. They are neat, but quite honestly I just don't have the time to participate in them," said Diodati.

Lois Lococo, who used social media when she ran for Niagara Falls city council during the October municipal election, said she has only used the Check In feature a few times. She said she believes it is used mainly by younger people as a way to stay in touch with friends.

"I don't use it on a regular basis, but sometimes if I'm at an event and it comes up I might do it, but not very often," said Lococo, who has more than 3,000 friends on Facebook.

During her campaign, she used a feature called "Where's Lori Now?" that would show her attending meetings or special events in the community. If that group or organization had its own Facebook page, she would share it with it.

tony.ricciuto@sunmedia.ca



FILE PHOTO

Niagara Falls leads the Facebook pack.

## FACEBOOK'S TOP 'CHECKED IN' CANADIAN LOCATIONS IN 2014

1. Niagara Falls
2. Rogers Centre
3. Ripley's Aquarium of Canada
4. Canada's Wonderland
5. The Toronto Zoo
6. Whistler Blackcomb
7. CN Tower / La Tour
8. The Calgary Zoo
9. Metro Toronto Convention Centre
10. Banff Lake Louise Tourism
11. Centre Bell
12. Capilano Suspension Bridge Park

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## THEATRE

# Shaw names new communications manager

JOHN LAW  
QMI Agency Niagara

Laura Hughes is going from Shaw Media to the Shaw Festival.

The 10-year public relations specialist has been named the festival's new senior communications manager, effective Jan. 5. She replaces Shaw's longtime public relations director Odette Yazbeck, who recently started a new role as the company's annual fund director.

Hughes has done media relations for HarperCollins Publishers, Toronto arts festival Luminato, and TV stations Bravo and TVO. She



LAURA HUGHES

started at Shaw Media in January of this year.

Earlier this year, she completed a four-month term as professor in the English and Liberal arts department of Seneca College.

Hughes has an honours BA in both drama and English from Queen's University.

"Laura has a passion for Canadian theatre," said Valerie Taylor, the Shaw Festival's director of marketing, communications and sales, adding Hughes will be "a valuable asset to the Shaw Festival and our team."

Yazbeck worked in Shaw's public relations department for 25 years. Shaw's executive director, Elaine Calder, will retire after next season, and 2016 will be the final season for artistic director Jackie Maxwell.

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■ **PUBLISHING:** One of Canada's most successful kids' book writers still calls St. Davids home

# The two worlds of author Jon Klassen

PENNY COLES  
QMI Agency Niagara

Google the name Jon Klassen and you'll discover he is an animator and a very successful author and illustrator of children's books.

He was born in Winipeg, grew up in Niagara Falls and now lives in Los Angeles. You'll find he has won so many prestigious awards, he is considered at the age of 33 one of the most successful Canadian authors. Ever. But what you might not find is his love of children's books and a desire to create books himself comes from spending some of the best hours of his childhood in his grandparents' house in St. Davids in Niagara-on-the-Lake, reading the books they collected for their five children.

Or that his latest success, *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole* — written by Mac Barnett and illustrated by Klassen — is dedicated to St. Davids. "I like a book that will make kids laugh, and also scare them a little," Klassen says. Perhaps the biggest surprise on meeting him is that such a successful author could be so humble, likable and engaging who loves to hang out with his parents John and Karen in St. Davids when he gets the chance — a world away from L.A. He looks like he belongs more in small-town Ontario than in one of the most sophisticated cities in the world. He appears to favour slightly wrinkled, lived-in checked shirts, well-worn ball caps and the two-day stubble now in vogue that might also be an effort to hide how young he looks. He's always understood the importance of family, he says, but had to leave home to discover the importance of roots. St. Davids, he thought, was a place to call home — but just a place. He now understands its significance in his life.

When he's not there, he says, "I miss it. This is where I feel most com-

fortable. I just get here and I relax." His parents have purchased the old Woodruff house on Four Mile Creek Rd., recently completing an elegant renovation. Once licensed, they plan to run it as a country inn. And while Klassen remembers the house from his younger days, when it was owned by the Woodruff family, as being huge and dark and scary — a perfect place for ghost stories — he's now discovering the 30-room house is a great party place, good for inviting Toronto friends for a visit. The journey to his current success began when his graduation from Sheridan College's animation program after high school led to a job at DreamWorks Studio, which most would consider a dream job, in Hollywood, where he was a storyboard artist. From there he moved to Laika, a smaller animation studio in Oregon, where he worked on Coraline, the company's first feature film. His first glimpse of what might lie ahead for him, he says, was the phone call in 2010 to tell him he'd won the Governor General's Award for illustrating *Car's Night Out*, a quirky story about what happens when a couple of cool cats begin dancing in the street. "I didn't see that coming at all," he said about the award. He decided it was time to write his own book, and what came of that was *I Want My Hat Back*.

Five publishing companies offered to print it only if he changed the ending — a grim outcome awaits the rabbit who stole the bear's hat — but he stuck by his work.

That book was followed by *This Is Not*

*My Hat*, this one about a big fish, a little fish and another snatched hat.

It won the Caldecott Medal, awarded annually to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children — Klassen was the first Canadian to win the award that has been handed out since 1938.

Another of his books, *Extra Yarn*, was also nominated the same year and won a Caldecott Honor — that has only happened once before in the history of the award.

His two hat books were on the *New York Times* bestseller list for more than 40 weeks, have been translated into 22 languages and have together sold more than a million copies.

At one time, three of Klassen's books overlapped on the bestseller list. He shrugs off that accomplishment as being a result of a "weird publishing schedule," as if it had nothing to do with the quality of his work. He's sure kids don't like to be spooned down to. And a story has to be established quickly, before they



PENNY COLES / QMI AGENCY NIAGARA  
Jon Klassen's latest book, about two brothers digging holes in a vacant field, is dedicated to St. Davids, where his grandparents lived when he was a child. His parents live there now, and this photo was taken in the library of the 30-room, recently restored house.

get bored and walk away.

"They don't care how well you write — they just want to know what's going on," he says. He likes the fact that while there may be some rules to writing children's books, "it's so much fun to break them." His two solo books do have a sense of morality to them — if you steal someone's hat, something bad is going to hap-

pen. But it's the kind of fairness kids understand, he says. He has his moments, he jokes, when he can picture himself a homeless old man in L.A. but for now he's still pretty much the kid who liked to dig holes in a vacant lot in St. Davids, trying to get the head around what they have led to.

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# LOCAL NEWS

## IN BRIEF

### NPCA board members recognized

During its final meeting of the year, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority board honoured its members not returning in 2015.

Each was presented with a custom-crafted pen carved from the wood of Pelham's Comfort Maple, considered to be the oldest sugar maple tree in Canada. The wood was collected through routine maintenance and pruning.

Those not returning are Debbie Zimmerman, former Grimsby regional councillor; Trevor Easton, former at-large citizen appointee for Grimsby; Dennis Dick, former Niagara-on-the-Lake councillor; David Eke, former

Niagara-on-the-Lake lord mayor; Bob Steckley, former Fort Erie councillor; and former Welland mayor Barry Sharpe.

### Award nominees sought

Welland's MPP Cindy Forster is looking for women and girls who are making a difference in their communities.

She is encouraging Welland riding residents to submit nominations for the Leading Women Leading Girls Building Communities Recognition Program. The deadline for nominations is Jan. 16.

"I am honoured to have the opportunity to recognize women across the Welland riding who are dedicated to community service and inspiring others," Forster said in a media release.

The competition includes categories for women 18 years and older, and for girls under 18.

Nomination forms can be downloaded from [www.cindyforster.ca](http://www.cindyforster.ca), or by calling constituency assistant Mike Holmes at 905-732-6884 or e-mailing Forster at [forster-c@ndp.on.ca](mailto:forster-c@ndp.on.ca).

Forster will forward nominations to the minister responsible for women's issues for consideration.

## ■ CHARITY



From left: former NHLers Steve Ludzik and Chuck McShane, Hotel Dieu Shaver CEO Jane Ruffano, MP Rick Dykstra, former NHLer Rick Vaive, Parkinson's patient Shawn Duff and the United Way's Eric Lamotte. SUPPLIED PHOTO

## Parkinson's clinic gets boost from ex-NHLers

GRANT LAFRANCIA  
(MI) Agency Niagara

More than \$130,000 flowed to the Hotel Dieu Shaver's rehab centre for Parkinson's disease from two charity events spearheaded by local hockey legends.

During a recent news conference at the Hotel Dieu Shaver's United Way of St. Catharines and District, along with St. Catharines MP Rick Dykstra, gave the Steve Ludzik Centre \$50,000 of the more than \$180,000 raised during the annual Hockey Night in St. Catharines game.

Dykstra said the rest of the money raised through the game was directed to the United Way.

Ludzik and Rick Vaive — both former National Hockey League players — presented the centre with \$85,311 raised during Ludzik's Golf Tournament and Roast events that are held in conjunction with the

hockey game. Ludzik himself has Parkinson's disease.

"Our goal, our long-term goal really, is to raise enough money so the clinic can run for a few years and expand" its work, said Vaive. "We have to build to that slowly, but that is what we are aiming at."

The Steve Ludzik Centre provides a six-week program aimed at improving the physical abilities of Parkinson's patients.

According to a Shaver press release, the centre "assists clients to identify goals related to improving depression and/or anxiety, strengthening their voice, improving bowel and bladder control and increase their knowledge of Parkinson's disease."

Although the centre is housed at the Shaver's facilities on Glenridge Ave., it is funded through private donations.

Hotel Dieu Shaver CEO Jane Ruffano said it costs about \$85,000 annually to run the clinic, which treated 47 people last year.

Ruffano said while she supports the goal of expanding the clinic to treat more patients, the more immediate goal should be to improve its waiting list, which is currently at about three years.

"If you are a person struggling with Parkinson's disease, waiting three years isn't really acceptable," she said.

"So while we want to expand the clinic, maybe we don't do that right now but find a way to reduce the length of that waiting list."

For more information or to donate to the clinic, go online to [www.hotel-dieushaverfoundation.com](http://www.hotel-dieushaverfoundation.com).

[grtlinfo@shaver.ca](http://grtlinfo@shaver.ca)  
Twitter: @grants



## PORT COLBORNE

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

PROPOSED TREE BY-LAW AND USER FEES

**TAKE NOTICE** that the Council of the Corporation of the City of Port Colborne will hold a public meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2015, at 6:30 P.M., in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 66 Charlotte Street, Port Colborne, in order to consider a proposed Tree By-law and User Fees.

**PURPOSE AND EFFECT** — The proposed By-law is being created to deal with trees on public and private property that may pose a threat to the public's safety. The By-law will regulate the planting, trimming, and removal of trees if required and will include procedures, notices, application forms as well as establishing user fees.

**ANY PERSON** may submit written comments prior to the meeting or attend the public meeting and make verbal representation at the time of the meeting.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION** is contained in Council Report No. 2015-02, "Proposed Tree By-law" available on the City's website at [www.portcolborne.ca](http://www.portcolborne.ca) or during regular office hours from the Clerk's Division at City Hall.

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Enforcement Officer  
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# LOCAL NEWS

■ **SUCCESS STORY:** Falls man who lost both of his legs an 'inspiration' for personal trainer

## 'Make the best of what you got'

RAY SPITERI

QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara Falls resident John Schutz is a finalist for GoodLife Fitness' greatest success story across Canada.

His personal trainer, Thomas DeAngelis, nominated him for the program, which promotes clients who have transformed their lives, such as significant weight loss or overcoming adversity, through exercising.

Schutz was a fairly active 56-year-old self-employed maintenance worker who enjoyed an active and healthy life until October 2011, when he was involved in a collision on the QEW near the

Glendale Ave. overpass in St. Catharines.

Both of his legs had to be amputated above the knees. But instead of feel sorry for himself, which would have been understandable, Schutz has prepared himself for new life challenges.

Five months after the accident, he joined GoodLife Fitness on Portage Rd. in Niagara Falls.

He has built more upper-body strength, which he needs for transfers when he's not wearing his prosthetics.

Joining the gym has also allowed him to gain overall body strength, which is needed because having the

prosthetics on causes added stress on his body.

"I've had to go to a larger shirt and coat size because I've gained mass up here," said Schutz. "I had a problem with my rotator cuff when I came here and they know how to work certain muscles, they know every muscle in the body and how it works and how it works with other ones, so they had me do exercises. That's not an issue anymore. I had that for a number of years, where I couldn't move my arm back, or up or whatever, now it's free range."

Schutz has made it to the top eight, out of about 100, in the personal training category of the GoodLife contest. Peo-

ple can vote for the finalists until Dec. 10. Winners will be announced the week of Dec. 15.

DeAngelis said voting only plays a part in the selection process.

He said prior to Schutz, he had never trained someone who is a double amputee.

"John's obviously a special case, so we do have to change some of the movements. (At first) it was kind of a trial and error, but it doesn't take away from a lot of the fundamental stuff that we did — strengthened shoulders, strengthened hips ... We kind of stuck to those, but program wise he's just like everyone else."

DeAngelis said he has never

worked with someone, or met someone, with as much perseverance and positive attitude as Schutz.

"I do have to say when I started working with him, I maybe expected someone who was a little bit negative and 'poor me,' but not once have I ever got that from him."

"He's probably the most positive person I've met. For me, he's just a total inspiration. When I think things may be a little rough, going bad, no, not at all. What he's pulled through is absolutely unbelievable."

Schutz said he knew it was going to be a "long road" to recovery after the accident, but he never let it affect his

attitude.

"I've been able to learn how to walk on prosthetics. I would go to Onkes Park, do some walking there, practice on curbs, walk downstairs."

He said you "can't change what's happened" and you always have to move forward.

"Make the best of what you got. I'm still alive. I still have my friends. I've got all those things still. I just don't have legs, well people are in a lot worse shape than me."

To vote for Schutz, visit <http://transformationchallenge.com/submissions/view/3866>

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# LOCAL NEWS

■ **RICK JEANNERET:** Legendary Sabres announcer bounces back from cancer

## 'There were some dark times'

**JOHN LAW**  
QMI Agency/Niagara

For long-suffering Buffalo Sabres fans, it felt like overkill. A gut punch after another wasted year.

The Sabres had just finished their miserable 2013/14 season in last place with a 21-51-5 record. It was already going to be a long summer.

And then came the news in July: The team's legendary play-by-play man Rick Jeanneret had cancer.

The man whose voice accompanied generations of Sabres fans had been feeling a sore throat throughout the spring. He still showed up for work, doing 47 games (mostly at home) as per his contract with the team. It didn't go away after the season so his doctor sent him to a specialist.

"He said there's something there," recalls Jeanneret from the kitchen of his Niagara Falls townhouse. "He didn't

know at that time what it was. So they put me in the hospital to have a biopsy done."

And that's when his world changed. "He said it's big... the size of a golf ball."

Even worse, it was his throat. Of all things for a radio announcer, Jeanneret can't even remember his reaction.

"I stopped at 'throat cancer.' I didn't hear anything after that."

That's when his wife Sandra took charge. She wrote down what had to be done, then made sure he did it.

"I think we both had an idea (what it was)," she says. "We were halfway prepared. My reaction was, all right, it is what it is. Let's get it done. Let's get it fixed."

The Sabres sent Jeanneret to Erie County Medical Center in Buffalo, where the diagnosis was confirmed. And the advice the same: Chemotherapy and radiation treatments. No surgery.



**MIKE DRATZ/PHOTO AGENCY NIAGARA**  
Buffalo Sabres legendary play-by-play man Rick Jeanneret talks about his battle with throat cancer from his Niagara Falls home.

"Surgery would have finished me. That would have been the end of my career right there."

As it was, Jeanneret was already winding down an incredible career. One that began virtually the same time the Sabres did. The St. Catharines native started doing play by play at night after working a full shift at CJRN in Niagara Falls. It was 1971, just the team's second season in the NHL. Wins were scarce, but Buffalo was ecstatic to have professional hockey.

Jeanneret's excitable style was an instant hit with fans, and he soon stockpiled memorable catchphrases. When someone roofed a goal, it was "top shelf where momma hides the cookies." When Sabre great Pat Lafontaine scored, it was "La-La-La-La-Lafontaine!"

His most famous call came during the 1983 playoffs when Sabres spark plug Brad May scored in overtime to eliminate the Boston Bruins. To this day, Jeanneret's screams of "May Day! May Day!" warm the hearts of Buffalo hockey fans.

He was behind the mike for Buffalo's two Stanley Cup runs, in 1974/75 and 1998/99. The 1999 team was anchored by the greatest goalie Jeanneret ever saw, Dominik Hasek.

In recent years, travel has become grueling for the 72-year-old announcer, especially long west-coast trips. Even certain areas have proven tough, like Montreal's Bell Centre with its steep stairways. In 2011, he negotiated a four-year deal to call 47 games per year to ease his way into retirement and work closely with his eventual full-time replace-

ment, Dan Dunleavy.

When the cancer diagnosis came, Jeanneret was defiant. He wasn't going to let this be how his career ended. It would be on his terms.

The first of couple radiation treatments felt fine. Then the pain hit. And the pain medication followed, which Jeanneret was told was "20 times stronger than heroin."

In all, there were 33 radiation treatments over seven weeks. He stopped eating solid food on Aug. 15 and just recently resumed. He lost 43 pounds.

"Even though they tell you what's going to happen, it's the unknown," he says.

"I can tell you, there were some dark times. Anybody who's been through it knows what I'm talking about. You're sitting there wondering, 'Is this working? Am I going through all this pain and everything only to be told at the end it didn't work and you're dying anyway? Whether you try to bar those thoughts from your mind, they're there."

"It wasn't good," adds Sandra, "but he was. He was a trooper."

Throughout the ordeal, Jeanneret was humbled by his team's concern. An e-mail was set up for fans to send well wishes, and thousands of messages poured in.

He returned to play-by-play for Buffalo's home game against the Toronto Maple Leafs Nov. 15. The Sabres won 6-2.

"It was the best game of the year," he says. "But when I got to the end of the first period, I looked at (Dan) and said, 'This ain't going to fly for any more tonight.'"

He was back home and in bed before the game even finished.

Just prior to that came one of the most emotional nights of Jeanneret's career. On Nov. 7, the Sabres hosted a Hockey Fights Cancer night in which Jeanneret and former Bills quarterback Jim Kelly, also recovering from cancer this year, dropped the puck for a game against the Edmonton Oilers. It was his first public appearance since the treatment, and Jeanneret was asked to speak with the team after the warm up.

"I told them I had just had a PET Scan, and the night before I got a call from the doctor and he said everything was all clear. I said, 'That's my Stanley Cup.'"

The Sabres have given Jeanneret carte blanche on broadcast. He can call whatever game he chooses for how long he wants. Some nights he can go two periods, some nights just one. Full games are rare.

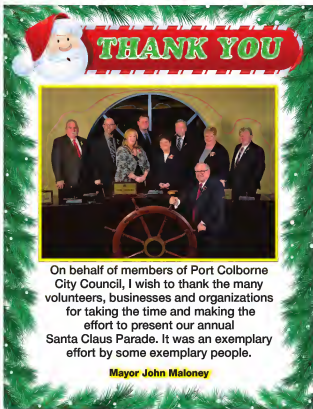
But for fans, Jeanneret back on the air is what matters. The long goodbye has begun.

"Other people have been through this, I'm not the only one," he says, sizing up the past year. "I just have a higher profile, perhaps. I only had to look around the cancer area to see how many people were being treated when I was... trust me, it's a busy place."

For Sandra, after months holding her emotions in check, she can finally let go.

"I tried to zero in on the medical part of it and hold my heart at bay," she says. "It gets me more now than it did then. It's all-consuming, going through it."

john.law@media.ca



On behalf of members of Port Colborne City Council, I wish to thank the many volunteers, businesses and organizations for taking the time and making the effort to present our annual Santa Claus Parade. It was an exemplary effort by some exemplary people.

**Mayor John Maloney**

■ COLUMN: Tony's Desk

# Fun way to track your money

**TONY RICCIUTO**  
QMI Agency Niagara

I found an interesting \$20 bill in my wallet recently that had some writing on the back of it that caught my attention.

It said: "Track this bill's journey online at [www.whereswilly.com](http://www.whereswilly.com)."

I had to check it out just for the fun of it and I was amazed by what I found. By punching in the serial number of this particular bill, FWB-158, I was able to find out that the initial entry was posted on Aug. 20, 2014, at 1:36 p.m. by someone in Woodstock, Ont. and that I recorded it online some 81 days, 20 hours and 48 minutes later in Niagara Falls. This bill is a 2012 series.

So far, this \$20 bill had travelled 131 kilometres from its starting location. Chances are this bill has travelled much further than the 131 kilometres that we know of because it was likely in circulation for a time before the person in Woodstock wrote on the back of the bill and started this process in motion. This reminds me of a chain letter that someone begins and others pass along while others just ignore it and it comes to an end.

It would be interesting if this could be done with a new bill, fresh from the bank, to see how many people register it online. That bill could change hands a number of times, and travel many miles, but we would never know if those who receive it fail to record it online.

The answers to many questions about this site can be found on their frequently asked questions page.

It says the site was conceived and developed by Hank Eskin, a database consultant from Brookline, Mass. In 1980 he created Where's George? — the United States Currency Tracker.

Where's George refers to George Washington, whose portrait appears on the \$1 bill. The \$1 bill is by far the

most popular denomination to track, followed by \$20 bills, with a close third being the \$5 bill. People are also tracking \$10, \$50 and \$100 bills.

Eskin had many requests to create a version to allow Canadians to play as well so he came up with Where's Willy. It was officially launched on Feb. 20, 2001.

"Willy" is Sir Wilfrid Laurier — the Canadian prime minister who held office from 1896 to 1911. His portrait is on the Canadian \$5 bill.

So, if you get a bill that asks Where's Willy, go to the home page and enter the serial number of the bill and your current postal code and then submit. You need to register before entering any bills to put them on your account so you can come back and track where they go next.

Eskin was interviewed by the *New York Times* in 1999. He was asked if he had any concerns about the Secret Service regarding defacement of American currency. His reply was: "They've got better things to do. They want to catch counterfeiters counterfeiting billions of dollars."

The Where's Willy website does not encourage the defacement of currency and it claims it has not been able to locate any Canadian statutes that prohibit writing on currency.

The site also goes into greater detail about what is legal or illegal and mentions changes that have been made to the Bank Act.

At one time, the defacement of bills was illegal, but that is no longer the case.

Sylvie Dionne, bank note communications and compliance team at the Bank of Canada, is quoted as saying: "At one time, the Bank Act contained a section that prohibited the mutilation and defacement of bank notes. Section 311 of the Bank Act was repealed in 1953. It was not added to the current version

of the Bank Act nor was it added to any other legislation. It is therefore no longer an offence to deface or mutilate paper money."

After finding this particular

\$20 bill, I put it aside because I wanted to write a column about this so it has been with me for about a month.

Once this column is published, I plan to "Free Willy."

I will put the \$20 bill back into circulation and, hopefully, I will be able to keep track of it through the website.

[tony.ricciuto@surmedia.ca](mailto:tony.ricciuto@surmedia.ca)



MIKE ORATISTA/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

By punching in the serial number of this particular bill, into the website marked on the front, you can find out where this bill has travelled.

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**EXAMEN DISPONIBLE EN FRANCAIS**

■ **REGION:** Petrowski, Gale say they'll look for ways to save money

# Shakeup on the police board

**ROB HOULE**

QMI Agency Niagara

Things are about to get really interesting at the police board.

Niagara Region council voted in three new regional representatives to the seven-member Niagara Regional Police Services board. Elected were councillors Bob Gale of Niagara Falls, David Barrick of Port Colborne and Andy Petrowski of St. Catharines.

Gale topped the vote count with 17 and Barrick and Petrowski tied with 16 votes. They will replace Henry D'Angela of Thorold, who served as board chair, Gary Burroughs of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Vance Badway, who lost to Barrick in a bid for Port Colborne regional councillor.

D'Angela garnered 13 votes, Burroughs 10 and Grimsby Mayor Bob Bentley received five votes.

Sandy Annunziata of Fort Erie, Brian Heit of St. Catharines and Bart Maves of Niagara Falls withdrew their names.

"Obviously, my top priority is to ensure the safety of the community, but we have to do it in a fiscally responsible manner," Petrowski said outside council chambers, after being elected to the board.

He said he will push to have officers wear body cameras, which he said would reduce litigation against the service while helping to protect officers.

"It's proven that violence against police goes down with the use of body cams," he said. "That will be a big issue."

Petrowski said he will keep close tabs on the construction of new police headquarters in Niagara Falls and a new detachment in St. Catharines to make sure they are completed on time and on budget.

He said "we have to turn over every stone. Seems that every police jurisdiction in Ontario has been able to find ways to save money, and we're just scratching the surface."

Gale, a businessman, former police officer and first-time politician, was visibly pleased by his election to the police board when interviewed outside chambers.

"I would like to look at every avenue there is to get the best (policing) at an affordable cost," he said.

Asked if he thought his and Petrowski's election would make the police board, Gale answered: "You're only nervous if you've got something to hide."

Gale said he is going into the police board with an open mind, "but we'll ask questions along the way."

Council filed all its committees, boards, commissions and agencies before the Christmas break.

Council voted to submit to the province the names of all councillors interested in sitting on the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

The province will choose from among Brian Bary of Pelham, West Lincoln Mayor Doug Joyner, D'Angela, Bill Hodgson of Lincoln, Selina Volpatti of Niagara Falls and Bruce Timms of St. Catharines.

Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati easily carried the vote — 20-8 — over Brian Heit of St. Catharines for the sole region spot on Niagara Parks Commission.

Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority will have a mix of new and seasoned board members.

Each of the 12 Niagara municipalities is represented on that board. Acclaimed were Joyner, Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs, Welland Mayor Frank Campton (George Marshall and Paul Grenier withdrew their names), Hodgson, Tony Quirk of Grimsby and Port Colborne Mayor John Maloney. Longtime board member Mark Dufresne will represent Thorold as a private citizen.

In the run-off, current board member Barty defeated Pelham Mayor Dan Augustus (18-9). Annunziata bested Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop (16-11). Niagara-on-the-Lake Mayor Pat Darie beat Burroughs (15-13) and current NPL chair Timms best St. Catharines rival Heit (16-12).

There was a three-way tie for the region's five spots on the Niagara Regional Housing Board. D'Angela, St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sandzik and Volpatti topped the vote with 18. Grenier (17) and Petrowski (16) rounded out the top five.

For the most part, councillors voted to allow all those wishing to serve on advisory committees to do so.

In decisions that were put to a ballot, newcomers to council were the top vote getters. Annunziata led the vote for economic development advisory panel (newbee Sandzik was second) and was tied for second with Debbie MacGregor of St. Catharines for the transportation strategy steering committee. Rookie Quirk topped that vote.

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■ **POLITICS**

# Top cop filed complaint

**RAY SPITERI**

QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara Regional Police Chief Jeff McGuire has filed a complaint with Niagara's integrity commissioner against St. Catharines regional councillor and newly elected police services board member Andy Petrowski.

Petrowski confirmed the complaint made against him, but would not disclose the details behind it.

McGuire would not originally confirm the complaint, but later did when told by QMI Agency Niagara that Petrowski had done so.

"Yes I've filed a complaint with the integrity commissioner at the region," said McGuire.

He said he filed the complaint on Sept. 25.

McGuire would not disclose why he made the complaint.

"It's best left in the hands of the integrity commissioner until he conducts the work he needs to do," said McGuire.

Petrowski is one of three new regional representatives elected to the Niagara Regional Police Services board by regional council.

He joins Bob Gale of Niagara Falls and David Barrick of Port Colborne as councillors' representatives on the seven-member board for the next four years.

They will replace Gary Burroughs of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Heit, D'Angela of Thorold, who served as board chair, and Vance Badway, who lost to Barrick in a bid for Port Colborne regional councillor in the Oct. 27 municipal election.

"I don't plan to allow the police's complaint against me to prejudice my role (on the board)," said Petrowski.

He said the "big picture," he wants to answer the question: "Are we getting the most out of taxpayers' money for police services? I don't believe

we are."

Petrowski said he doesn't want to disclose details behind the complaint because he doesn't want to jeopardize any investigation.

"I believe the integrity commissioner will find the complaint of the police chief to be unfounded. I stand by everything that I say publicly to my fellow councillors about the state of the Niagara Region and specific individuals."

The Region's integrity commissioner George Rust D'Eve said he was "not in a position to answer that question" when asked whether McGuire filed a complaint against Petrowski.

"If there is a complaint and if I file a report, it will become a public document," said D'Eve.

Meanwhile, Petrowski said he is pleased Gale and Barrick were also elected to the board.

He said the three of them will bring a "unique and fresh" perspective to the board, providing "oversight to the way police services run."

"Our job is to make sure we deliver the best quality of policing at the lowest cost possible."

"I believe we're going to ask tough questions, be informed and turn over every rock."

Gale described McGuire and Petrowski as "two mature individuals."

"This is the first I've heard of this," he said. "I do not know the basics of the complaint and I'm not taking any side. We will move on."

As for his council colleagues on the board, Gale said: "We have three councillors coming in who are more cost conscious than you have ever seen."

Barrick could not be reached for comment.

McGuire said he had a "great relationship" working with the previous board, and

he looks forward to working with the new board to "deliver good, efficient policing to the citizens of Niagara."

He said the board has many projects on the go and acknowledged there is "always a danger of losing continuity" when several new members are elected to the board, but "change on the board is constant."

"We all have to work together to make sure the service runs efficiently."

Burroughs, who lost his bid to once again serve on the board, said Petrowski, Gale and Barrick should expect to be busy.

"It will be interesting for them. There's a lot involved. It is a negotiating year in 2015. They will be very busy," said the Niagara-on-the-Lake regional councillor and former regional chair.

"It's usually about 40 hours a month."

Burroughs said he would "never give advice" to incoming representatives.

"I'm sure they have their own mind made up what they want to do there."

"I loved it. It was terrific. I think we got a lot done. Having chief McGuire has been a great addition. It's in good shape. It's up to the new group there now."

The police services board is a civilian governance body for the Niagara Regional Police.

It's comprised of seven members — three regional councillors, three Niagara citizens appointed by the province and one citizen appointment by regional council.

The board is responsible for the provision of adequate and effective police services for Niagara's 12 municipalities, serving about 430,000 residents and an estimated 15 million visitors annually.

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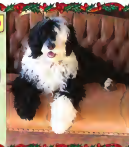
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# LOCAL NEWS

■ **HEALTH:** Goal is quicker diagnosis so patients can stay in Ontario

## Province developing anti-Lyme disease plan

ROB HOULE

QMI Agency Niagara

It's a case of better late than never.

"It would have been better a year ago. I don't know if anything will happen to better my situation, but of course it's something — it's something to grab a hold of," Amanda Wilson said of a provincial strategy on Lyme disease.

The 40-year-old Fort Erie resident has been battling the disease since being bitten by an infected blacklegged tick last year.

Her affliction went undiagnosed until she paid for a blood test in the U.S. that showed positive for Lyme disease.

Prior to that, two blood tests approved by the provincial Health Ministry had come back negative.

Since the diagnosis, she has had to pay out of pocket for treatment in Buffalo. Unable to work at her job as a border security agent, savings were depleted. Money was borrowed from relatives. A fundraiser was held.

Treatment at an American clinic costs her \$1,500 a week. Supplements and other medication cost another \$2,000 a month.

Her self-employed husband, Jeff, 41, was also recently diagnosed with Lyme disease. His current treatment costs \$500 a week.

Wilson is buoyed by a directive from Queen's Park last week that set in motion the development of a comprehensive strategy to protect citizens against Lyme disease and to quickly diagnose and treat those infected.

The motion, introduced by Algoma-Manitowish MPP Michael Mantha, gained all-party support.

"The will of the House was to direct the government to establish a Lyme disease strategy," Mantha said.

That strategy, he said, will be developed within the next year in full consultation with Lyme disease stakeholders, such as the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation, the Ontario Lyme Alliance, the G. Magnotta Foundation for Vector Borne Diseases, and their



SARAH FERGUSON/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Fort Erie husband and wife Jeff and Amanda Wilson are battling Lyme disease.

medical experts.

"We need to bring those expert opinions, views and testing to Ontario so that Lyme patients ... can be properly diagnosed immediately so that an aggressive antibiotic treatment can be done," Mantha said.

Mantha noted the neurological disease is referred to as a "great imitator," because its symptoms mimic those of the flu and other diseases such as fibromyalgia and Lou Gehrig's disease.

Caught early, Lyme is easily treated with a regime of antibiotics.

The problem in Canada is the test administered only looks for the presence of one strain of Borrelia, the bacteria that causes Lyme. If some-

one is infected with a different strain, testing comes back negative, they go undiagnosed, don't get treated and the disease becomes chronic and can attack a person's heart, brain, joints, connective tissue, muscles, digestive system, eyesight and hearing.

Niagara Wilson and Matt Risi, of Thorold, who could not get a diagnosis in Ontario for what was ailing them, were forced to pay for blood work in the U.S. at labs that test for multiple strains of Borrelia.

After testing positive for Lyme, they have had to seek treatment in the U.S. at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars.

"The technology that we have to identify the strains of Lyme are outdated," Mantha

said.

"So of course, when people go for their tests, they test negative. There are other jurisdictions that have the proper testing available, we just need to make that testing available to our health-care professionals here in Ontario."

Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates spoke in favour of the Lyme disease strategy during debate in the legislature.

Gates said he has heard from a number of constituents with Lyme disease, including Wilson, and doesn't believe they should have to leave the country for a diagnosis or treatment.

"We have a real problem here, and I believe we have to come up with a strategy, an overall plan to make sure

Ontarians and Canadians are being taken care of," Gates said.

"I don't think you should have to go to the States to be told that you have Lyme disease, and here's the medication you need. We should be able to do that right here."

Rossana Magnotta, who heads the G. Magnotta Foundation named in memory of her husband, Gabe, who died as a result of Lyme disease in 2009, said an Ontario strategy is a step in the right direction.

"What's really important about this motion ... is that (Mantha) wants ... the patient groups and their experts to be part of this (strategy)," Magnotta said.

"I didn't want it to all go back in government hands again, because right now we

have the status quo because it's only been government that's been involved"

Magnotta has been raising money to establish a Lyme disease research centre at Humber River Hospital, which is under construction in north-end Toronto and is slated to open in fall 2015.

Wilson expects to continue intravenous treatment until March and faces an indeterminate period after that before she recovers her health.

"Lyme disease is here and it's not going to go anywhere," Wilson said. "Citizens and people who reside in Canada need to be treated, treated fairly and justly."

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## ■ STORE CLOSING: Pop culture mecca shutting its doors



MIKE DIBATTISTA/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Pulp Comics owner Paul Tappay will be closing the doors after almost six years on Queen St. in downtown Niagara Falls.

## Pulp Comics packs it in

JOHN LAW  
QMI Agency Niagara

Downtown Niagara Falls' cornerstone for pop culture will be closing early in the new year.

Patrons of Pulp Comics received the bad news from owner Paul Tappay that his five-and-a-half year old shop on the corner of Queen St. and Crisler Ave. will soon be shutting its doors.

"There's only so much hobby money to go around," says Tappay, citing the increased competition from Big B Comics on Lundy's Lane and box stores like Walmart now selling graphic novels.

"When you start saturating the market with options, that piece of the pie you're used to getting inevitably will change."

Niagara Falls was unique in that it had three comic book shops (The Neutral Zone, Big B Comics). Tappay's business started small in a space next to the Hair Lover's Place salon on Queen St., then three years ago moved two blocks up the street to the former Potpointes and Ed Spers Gallery building.

The new space's 270 square metres, spread across two floors, allowed Pulp Comics to expand into gaming and other collectibles. A mural of comic book characters was painted on the side, making it one of downtown's most unique buildings.

The store's success led Tappay to co-found the Niagara Falls Comic Con, which is now one of the city's biggest annual events.

"I take some solace in the fact Pulp Comics led to a bigger influx in pop culture in the city," he says. "If it wasn't for Pulp Comics, the Niagara Falls Comic Con wouldn't have happened."

But Tappay has noticed four to five months of "steady decline" in business, and made the difficult decision to stop purchasing inventory. He's hoping for a single buyer to absorb his stock, but if not will have a series of sales until at least the end of January.

he would open in the dead zone of January or February.

"As any retail person will tell you, they're the worst two months of the year."

Closing Pulp will be especially emotional for Tappay since it's the business his father Gerry funded as thanks for donating half his liver to him, which helped save his life in 2009.

"That was the hardest conversation, talking to my dad about it," he says.

Leaving Queen St. behind will also be hard, as Tappay has long been one of the street's biggest supporters. He plans to rent a small space on the street so that he can remain on its board of directors.

"Inevitably, it feels bad that I'm leaving right after Cupio's closed," he says. "People love to pile on Queen St. Nothing more fun than kicking somebody when they're down."

Tappay's life has completely changed since he opened the business. I got married in September, and supporting a new family factored into his decision to close the store. He plans on seeking a sales position and contribute to the community, possibly with the humane society (he recently lost both his dogs).

"I'm the Comic Book Guy... it's tied into who I am. I'm hoping I can use the contacts, the networks, the friendships I've made to continue to give back to the community. I love Niagara Falls and want to be a part of it."

Downtown BIA chairman Phil Ritchie said Tappay is a "savvy entrepreneur working in a tough sector."

"The big picture demand for comics overall is declining, comic book venues have increased in Niagara, and the ever insatiable high box stores now compete in this space."

He's confident a new tenant for the space will be secured.

"It's important that we celebrate our many openings and expansions as much as we mourn when a business closes."

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